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Paper for Short, c 1815

See The Library, 4th ser, xxv (1945) pp 72-9

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The Mowing-Devil:

Or, *S*trange *NEWS* out of

Hartford-ſhire.

Being a True Relation of a Farmer, who Bargaining with a Poor *Mower*, about the Cutting down Three Half Acres of *Oats*; upon the *Mower*'s asking too much, the *Farmer* ſwore, *That the Devil ſhould Mow it, rather than He:* And ſo it fell out, that that very Night, the Crop of *Oats* ſhew'd as if it had been all of a Flame; but next Morning appear'd ſo neatly Mow'd by the Devil, or ſome Infernal Spirit, that no Mortal Man was able to do the like.

Alſo, How the ſaid *Oats* ly now in the Field, and the Owner has not Power to fetch them away.

Licenſed, *Auguſt* 22th. 1678.

Gough Adds Hertfordshire 4 5.

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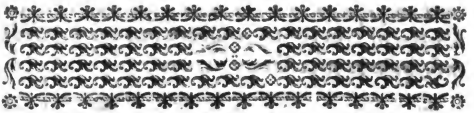

THE

MOWING-DEVIL

OR,

Strange NEWS out of *Hartfordſhire*, &c.

MEn may dally with Heaven, *and Criticiſe on Hell, as Wittily as they pleaſe, but that there are really ſuch places, the wiſe Diſpenſations of Almighty Providence, does not ceaſe continually to evince. For if by thoſe accumulated circumſtances which generally induces us to the belief of any thing beyond our ſenſes, we may reaſonably gather that there are certainly ſuch things as* Devils, *we muſt neceſſarily conclude, that theſe* Devils *have a* Hell; *and*

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as there is a Hell, *there must be a* Heaven, *and consequently a GOD; and so all the Duties of Christian Religion as indispensible subsequents necessarily follow.*

The first of which Propositions, this ensuing Narrative does not a little help to Confirm.

For no longer ago, than within the compass of this present Month of *August*, there hapned so unusual an Accident in *Hartfordshire*, as is not only the general Discourse, and Admiration of the whole Country; but may for its Rarity Challenge any other event, which has for these many years bin Produc't in any other County whatsoever. The Story thus.

In the said County, Lives a Rich industrious Farmer, who perceiving a small Crop of his (of about three Half-Acres of Land which he had Sowed with *Oats*) to be Ripe and fit for Gathering, sent to a poor Neighbour whom he knew worked commonly in the Summer-time at Harvest Labor, to agree with him about Mowing, or Cutting the said *Oats* down; The poor Man as it behoov'd Him, endeavour'd to sell the Sweat of his Brows and Marrow of his Bones at as dear a Rate as reasonably he might, and therefore askt a good round Price for his Labour, which the Farmer taking some exceptions at, bid him much more under the usual Rate than the poor Man askt above it; So that some sharp Words had past, when the Farmer told

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told him he would Discourse with him no more about it. Whereupon the honest *Mower* recollecting with himself, that he undertook not that little Spot of Work, he might thereby lose much more Business which the Farmer had to employ him in beside, ran after him, and told him, that, rather than displease him, he would do it at what rate in Reason he pleas'd; and as an instance of his willingness to serve him, propos'd to him a lower price, than he had Mowed for any time this Year before. The irretated *Farmer* with a stern look, and hasty gesture, told the poor man, *That the Devil himself should Mow his* Oats *before he should have any thing to do with them*, and upon this went his way, and left the sorrowful Yeoman, not a little troubled that he had disoblig'd one in whose Power it lay to do him many kindnesses.

But how ever, in the happy series of an interrupted prosperity, we may strut, and plume ourselves over the miserable Indigencies of our necessitated Neighbours; yet there is a just God above, who weighs us not by our Bags, nor measures us by our Coffers; but looks upon all men indifferently, as the common Sons of *Adam*; so that he who carefully Officiates that Rank or Station wherein the *Almighty* has plac't him, tho but a mean one, is truly more worthy the Estimation of all Men, than he who is prefer'd to superior dignities, and abuses them: And what greater abuse, than the contempt of Men below him: the relief of whose common necessities is none of the least Conditions wherby he holds all his *Good things*; which when

 that

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that Tenure is forfeited by his default, he may juſtly expect ſome Judgment to enſue; or elſe that thoſe riches wherby he prizes himſelf ſo extravagantly, may ſhortly be taken from him.

We will not attempt to fathom the cauſe, or reaſon of *Preternatural* events; but certain we are, as the moſt Credible and General Relation can inform us, that that ſame night this poor *Mower*, and *Farmer* parted, his Feild of *Oats* was publickly beheld by ſeveral Paſſengers, to be all on a Flame, and ſo continued for ſome ſpace, to the great conſternation of thoſe that beheld it.

Which ſtrange news being by ſeveral carried to the *Farmer* next morning, could not but give him a great Curioſity to go and ſee what was become of his Crop of *Oats*, which he could not imagin, but was totally devour'd by thoſe ravenous Flames which were obſerv'd to be ſo long reſident on his Acre and half of Ground.

Certainly a reflection on his ſuddain and indiſcreet expreſſion, [*That the Devil ſhould Mowe his* Oats *before the poor Nan ſhould have any thing to do with them*] could not but on this occaſion come into his Memory. For if we will but allow our ſelves ſo much leiſure, to conſider how many hits of providence go to the production of one Crop of Corn, ſuch as the aptitude of Soyl, the Seaſonableneſs of Showers, Nouriſhing Solſtices and Salubreous winds, *&c.* we ſhould rather welcome Maturity

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Maturity with Devout Acknowledgments than prevent our gathering of it by our profuſe wiſhes.

But not to keep the Curious Reader any longer in ſuſpence, the inquiſitive *Farmer* no ſooner arriv'd at the place where his *Oats* grew, but to his admiration he found the Crop was Cut down ready to his hands; and as if the Devil had a mind to ſhew his dexterity in the art of *Husbandry*, and ſcorn'd to mow them after the uſual manner, he cut them in round Circles, and plac't every ſtraw with that exactneſs that it would have taken up above an Age, for any Man to perform what he did in that one night: And the man that ows them is as yet afraid to remove them.

FINIS.

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